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BRAD CARSON
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INFORMATION
CONTACT:
Brad Luna
(202) 225-2701

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislative Update – Rural America’s Fountain of Youth

Washington, D.C. --

As small towns continue to struggle, we need to make sure that rural communities remain a good place to live. Places where our best assets are teamed with economic opportunities for future generations.

Making rural communities a desirable place to live is not the whole answer. If there is no economic opportunity in an area, young families can’t live there no matter how much they might want to. However, economic opportunity is more likely to be created in attractive places to live because they draw young families and entrepreneurs who start new farms and revitalize existing enterprises. In recent decades, rural communities with natural amenities to draw people - lakes, mountains, rivers, or climate-have grown.

Most farm and ranch communities don’t have mountains or lakes. They aren’t likely to become the next tourist filled Aspen, and most of us wouldn’t want that. But each of our communities has assets, strengths, and opportunities we can build on to draw people-native sons and daughters back to raise their families and others seeking a rural life style. Those assets range from natural amenities, to strong schools, to friendly neighbors. The best place to start is with existing strengths.

One of the major strengths to rural living is small schools. Small schools have long been a drawing card for rural communities. Communities that make a commitment to provide a quality education in small, community based schools and invest in them will always have a powerful advantage in attracting young families with children. But small rural schools are facing increasing financial pressures and are under growing political pressure to consolidate.

It is our small schools that keep fewer kids from falling through the cracks. And the efficiency gains of consolidation often disappear when construction and transportation costs are counted and efficiency is measured in cost per graduate. Also small schools, on average, graduate a higher percentage of their students.

Another advantage is our sense of community. Many people long to live in a community where people know and care about each other. We can offer them that and also a community that works in harmony.

People in our communities work together to solve problems and make things better. They have disputes, but they resolve them rather than letting them simmer. Communities can enhance their future by establishing a culture of working together to solve problems, launch new initiatives, and make the community a better place to live. And those are some of the things that we do best. Rural communities know that in order for them to survive they must all work together and that goes hand and hand with each individual's pride in their community. People are in this together and we are always willing to help a neighbor in need.

We also need to make sure that we are welcoming the new comers. The young families of our communities are our future we need to make sure and give them a reason to stay. We need children sports programs, area pools, and programs to enrich the lives of their children.

Another important factor is high-speed Internet service. The Internet is a vital part of communication. Young people see it as a contributor to quality of life. It enables them to connect to the outside world in a way that brings cultural and other amenities of distant places closer.

We also need to take advantage of our environment and resources. We have beautiful land and a lot of it. Businesses such as Bed and Breakfasts and guests ranches offer a nice getaway for the big cities around us. We preserve a more peaceful way of life that everyone needs. There is also a need for restoring ponds and streams. Once restored our ponds and streams would be a great place for hiking and fishing.

Our communities are beautiful and prosperous. We need to make sure that we are making that known. We need to do what we do best and come together to make our communities a desirable place to live. We know what it means to live in rural America, the values, and closeness, the friendships, and the sense of belonging. Now it is our turn to show that to the rest of the world.

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